

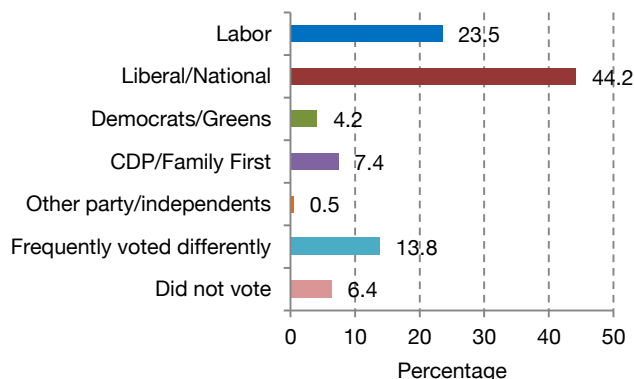
Voting patterns of local church leaders

Overall responses

In late 2011 as a part of the 2011 National Church Life Survey, a sample of approximately 2,000 local church leaders in senior positions¹ from Catholic, Anglican and Protestant churches were asked the following question:

What have been your voting patterns over the last 10 years in lower house Federal elections?

Figure 1: Local church leader voting pattern



Source: 2011 NCLS Leader Survey Versions A,B, C and D (n=2,034).

Liberal/National was the most popular voting choice, with 44% of local church leaders in senior positions having voted this way. Almost a quarter (24%) voted Labor, and 14% indicated that they had frequently voted differently².

Demographic differences in voting

There was a strong difference in voting patterns by age. The vote among the oldest (70+ years) and youngest (15-29 years) age groups was strongly Liberal/National, with almost two thirds of local leaders in these age groups (64% for 70+, and 62% for 20-29) having voted for the coalition. In contrast, the middle age groups (50-

¹ Local senior church leaders indicated that they were either "The minister, pastor or priest of this congregation/parish", "The senior minister/pastor/priest of a ministry team here", "An interim minister, pastor or priest here" or "A layperson serving as the principal leader here".

² "Generally One Nation" and "Some other party or independents" were listed separately in the survey question. However, due to small numbers, the results are presented together here.

59 and 60-69 years) reported the strongest Labor vote, at 27% and 29% of respondents respectively.

Table 1: Local church leader voting by age

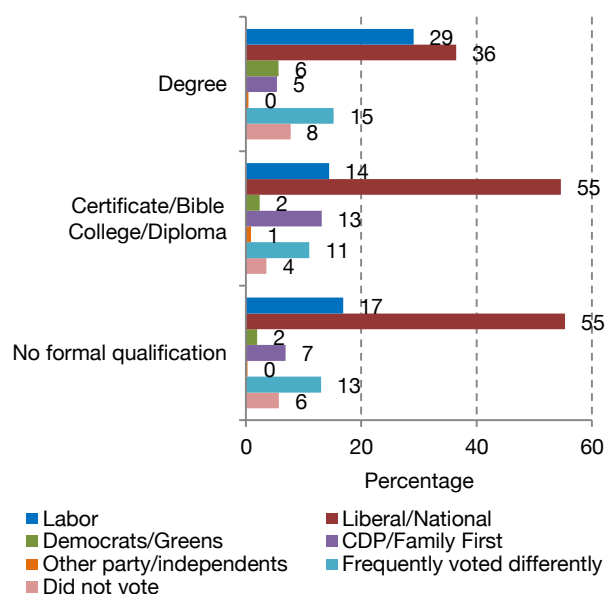
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Overall
Labor	9	10	23	27	29	20	23
Liberal/National	62	42	39	43	45	64	44
Democrats/Greens	0	7	3	5	4	0	4
CDP/Family First	10	9	11	7	4	3	7
Other party/independents	1	2	0	0	0	1	1
Frequently voted differently	18	15	14	12	16	11	14
Did not vote	0	15	10	5	3	1	6

Source: 2011 NCLS Leader Survey Versions A,B, C and D (N=2,027).

Local church leaders who were women were less likely to vote for the Coalition than men (36% versus 46%), and a greater proportion of women than men voted Labor or for the minor parties.

In terms of level of theological education, local senior leaders who had at least a bachelor degree in theology/ministry (58% of all local senior leaders) were much more likely than other to vote Labor and much less likely to vote Liberal/National.

Figure 2: Local church leader voting by theological education



Source: 2011 NCLS Leader Survey Versions A,B, C and D (n=1,988).

Denominational differences in voting

The voting pattern of local church leaders varied greatly between denominations. The strongest contrast is present between Pentecostal and Uniting Church leaders. The Liberal/National vote was extremely strong among Pentecostal leaders, at 74%. The next most popular choice was the CDP or Family First, with 15% of leaders having made this choice. Pentecostals were least likely among all leaders to change their vote, with only 3% of senior leaders indicating that they had done this. No Pentecostals in this dataset had consistently voted for the Democrats or the Greens.

In contrast, among Uniting Church leaders, 40% voted for the Labor Party (more than tenfold the Labor vote among Pentecostals) and the Liberal/National vote was less than a third of what it was among Pentecostals, at 21%. Almost a fifth (18%) of Uniting Church senior leaders had consistently voted for the Greens or the Democrats, much more than leaders from other denominations.

The Labor vote among Catholic and Anglican leaders approached that observed in the Uniting Church leadership, and the Catholics and Anglicans also displayed the greatest proportion of respondents who had frequently changed their vote (18% and 19% respectively).

Table 2: Church leader voting by denomination

	Angli- can	Baptist/ Church- es of Christ	Cath- olic	Luth- eran	Pente- costal	Unit- ing	Other Prot- estant
Party	Percentage						
Labor	36	13	38	15	4	40	15
Liberal/National	35	52	31	59	74	21	47
Democrats/Greens	2	3	1	0	0	18	2
CDP/Family First	4	14	1	5	15	1	8
Other party/ independents	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
Frequently voted differently	19	14	18	16	3	14	16
Did not vote	4	4	10	5	5	5	11

Source: 2011 NCLS Leader Survey Versions A,B, C and D (n=2,034).

How do leaders compare with attenders?

The voting pattern for church leaders as a whole was similar to the voting pattern for church attenders as a whole (see Table 3). The main difference was a higher portion of attenders who did not vote (12% of attenders versus 6% of leaders). However, an examination of leaders versus attenders within denominations shows a different story.

Leaders and attenders are highly distinct in both the Pentecostal and the Uniting churches. There is a much stronger inclination towards the Liberal and National parties among Pentecostal leaders (74%) as compared to Pentecostal attenders (36%), and the reverse is true of the Uniting Church (21% of leaders versus 47% of attenders). The proportion of Labor voters among Uniting Church attenders was a quarter (compared to 40% of leaders), and very few attenders from this denomination voted Democrat or Green (3% versus 18% of leaders). There was also a markedly stronger preference for Labor and weaker preference for Liberal/National among Anglican leaders (36% Labor and 35% Liberal/National) as compared to Anglican attenders (19% Labor and 46% Liberal/National).

Table 3: Voting patterns of church leaders and attenders

	Leaders	Attenders
Party	Percentage	
Labor	23.5	23.6
Liberal/National	44.2	41.8
Democrats/Greens	4.2	1.3
CDP/Family First	7.4	6.4
Other party/independents	0.5	1.2
Frequently voted differently	13.8	13.2
Did not vote	6.4	12.4

Source: 2011 NCLS Leader Survey Versions A,B, C and D, 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Surveys N, O and R.

References

- Powell, R., (2011) [computer file], 2011 NCLS Leader Survey A, NCLS Research, Sydney.
 Powell, R., (2011) [computer file], 2011 NCLS Leader Survey B, NCLS Research, Sydney.
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About NCLS: The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is a quantitative survey of 260,000-450,000 church attenders, 6,000-10,000 church leaders and 3,000-7,000 churches in more than 20 Australian denominations every census year since 1991.